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Why Catechesis

Essay by Rev. Daniel P. Landin



One of the most frequent questions I field from my seventh- and eighth-grade Confirmation students is, “Why do we have to do this?” Usually it’s posed when we talk about staying up to date on sermon notes or my requirement that they memorize Luther’s Small Catechism.

My answer to the sermon notes question is that it helps them learn how to listen to the sermon and to be attentive to the various parts of the liturgy. My answer to the need to memorize the Small Catechism is that the work they put in to memorize it will help impress the meanings of its six parts into their minds and hearts so that, when they inevitably forget the word-for-word meanings, they will still retain the core meanings of the various answers to Luther’s question, “What does this mean?”

Once those students complete their two years of study and are confirmed, what then? What comes after Confirmation? This is the tricky part that many pastors, including myself, have struggled with. From what I have seen so far in my 10 years serving three different Lutheran parishes, the majority of confirmands will continue to come to Sunday services, and some will continue to attend Sunday School and/or youth group meetings. Sadly, as I’m sure many of you have seen as well, some come less and less frequently (eventually attending only on Easter and Christmas), and some we won’t see again until they want to get married in the church.

Why does this happen? I believe it is because so many individuals in our churches view Confirmation as “graduation” from church and falsely believe that by that point, they have learned everything they need to know. Learning stops, and engagement in the life of the church stalls. This is where the wisdom of Martin Luther comes in. He understood that we are never done learning or growing in our faith. In his preface to the Large Catechism, he wrote, “I must still read and study [the parts

of the catechism] daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish. But I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so” (LC, Longer Preface, 7-8).

For Luther, the study of the catechism was a life-long pursuit, not reserved for a couple of years of Confirmation study! He also wrote these words in introducing each of the six parts of the Small Catechism: “As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.” Catechesis is not just an activity for pastors or the church, but is meant to be done in the household as well! In the Baptism rite in the Lutheran Book of Worship, parents and sponsors promise to do this, too!

St. Paul wrote to Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (1 Timothy 4:1-2). His words, along with Luther’s understanding that we all need time in the catechism, should encourage pastors and parents to diligently teach both scripture and the catechism to those in their charge. For parents, that means to your children at home. For pastors, that means all of your parishioners, not just the students in your Confirmation class.

With this understanding in mind, I often include quotes from the catechism and the other documents found in the Book of Concord in my sermons. I’ve also been teaching the catechisms alongside the Augsburg Confession in an adult study group, which I highly encourage other pastors to do as well. Catechesis is for the home, for the Confirmation classroom, for sermons, and Bible study groups. We are a people who will never master the catechism, so let us gladly remain students of it until Christ returns or calls us to him. 

Rev. Daniel P. Landin of Holland, Indiana, is pastor of [St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church](#).

Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



PSALM 21:4-5, 11-12,13

He asked life of you; you
gave it to him, length of
days forever and ever.
His glory is great through
your salvation; splendor
and majesty you
bestow on him.
For you make him most
blessed forever; you
make him glad with the
joy of your presence.
Though they plan evil
against you, though
they devise mischief,
they will not succeed.
For you will put them to
flight; you will aim at
their faces with your
bows.
Be exalted, O Lord, in your
strength! We will sing
and praise your power.

Psalm 21 is divided into three parts, verses 1-7, 8-12, and 13 by itself.

Each part has a specific and earthly prayer purpose, but these words also show — or perhaps more precisely, reflect — God's plan for all of us for salvation through Jesus.

The first section is thanksgiving and praise of God for the blessings given to the king, David. The words sing of rich and godly blessings accorded to him, in particular a life that extends forever and ever in the presence of the Lord.

The second section describes what God will continue to do even after these rich blessings are in place. The king already has victories and splendor and the favor of the Lord, but it continues with protection from all of his enemies going forward.

And the third section circles back to praise, beginning with the request-slash-statement that the Lord will and does exert his strength.

Parallel with David's words, we also see the joy and exaltation that follow the Messiah who has come to win salvation for his people. This King, Jesus, exults in his heart's desire — that the Father keeps us as his own, forever.

Through Jesus, God destroys our enemies of sin and death. This doesn't just go up to a certain point, and from then on we are all tossed out to fend for ourselves. It's all sin and all death for all time. His

protection isn't passive, but in fact goes out to find and destroy the evil. In the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus took on all our sins, defeated the devil in hell, and continues to rule in his strength.

As in the final verse of Psalm 21, there is no more we can do but sing praise for these great blessings!

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Read the psalm and reflect upon the following questions provided for your own personal devotions or in a short Bible study session.

1. Read verses 4-7 and discuss how these verses could relate to the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. For more, read Matthew 26:39.

2. The king is rejoicing in great eternal blessings. In verses 11-12, who acts to preserve these blessings? What lesson can we take from that?

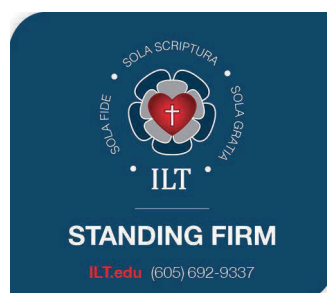
3. In times when we aren't sure God cares for us individually, how could Psalm 21 be of help?

PRAYER

Lord, show us your strength, and bring it to bear for us. Help us see your blessings, and love and praise you for them. Amen. 

The author of this installment, **Karen Nelson** of Bertrand, Nebraska, is general editor of Connections Online and owner of Karen Nelson Editing and Design.

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The Animated Catechism Project



Ministry Partner Focus

THE PROJECT

The Animated Catechism Project is an animated dive into Luther's Small Catechism, guided thoroughly with lively conversation accompanied by thematic visuals, offering wisdom according to the roots of our faith in the church abroad.

EXAMPLES

Animated Bible overview: bit.ly/Fruit-Cup-Bible-Overview
John 3:16 in LEGO: bit.ly/Fruit-Cup-John-316

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CONTACT

AustinMinionAnimations@gmail.com

Grace to you! My name is Austin Minion, and I'm a professional animation artist using a technique called stop-motion, a charming method involving handcrafted materials being animated one frame at a time. Over the last three years, with a passion for truth, storytelling, and the church, I've been crafting stop-motion animations based on the Bible, inviting viewers of all ages to engage with Scripture from fun and approachable perspectives. With support from Christ's body, I believe that this project's team will be able to create a high-quality animated series built around Sola Publishing's translation of Luther's Small Catechism.

The hope of this project is that through its discussion-style and creative visuals it may serve the church as a comprehensive introduction, overview, and conclusion of Luther's Small Catechism, serving as a free tool for homeschool families, confirmation classes, and anyone else in the church, that the church may further in its strengthening of old-age truth for those both new to the faith or young in age.

This series will be broken into roughly seven episodes, following the format of the original Small Catechism text: Introduction to the Catechism, The 10 Commandments, The Apostles' Creed, The Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism plus The Office of the Keys plus Confession, The Sacrament of the Altar, and a Conclusion, with the Daily

Prayers dispersed throughout each episode.

While this project is being fully directed and produced by me and my team, we are very excited to be embracing Sola Publishing as one of The Animated Catechism Project's Fiscal Sponsors. Sola will be aiding in financial support and providing the Small Catechism translation, while also accepting tax-deductible donations from other donors on behalf of the project.

The project's fiscal goal is \$65,000. This total will cover equipment, resources, and labor. If you or your gathering would like to join The Animated Catechism Project as a Fiscal Sponsor, please head to the [Support page at solapublishing.com](https://solapublishing.com) and set the donation option to The Animated Catechism Project. You may also make a donation via mailing a check.

Please email me at AustinMinionAnimations@gmail.com with questions.

We are hoping and praying that The Animated Catechism Project may be a blessing to your church community! Please be praying as we plan to roll into production beginning Fall 2026. Pray that we are led by Jesus' Spirit of wisdom, that all of our needs for this project are met, and that all of our works bring glory to our God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Thank you! 

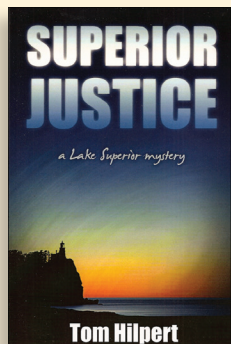
Austin Minion of Alexandria, Minnesota, is a stop-motion animation artist with a passion for the Kingdom and owner of A.M. Animations.

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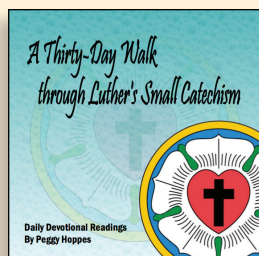
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FICTION

The first in this four-title mystery series by Tom Hilpert is the eponymous **Superior Justice**, featuring a Lutheran pastor who investigates mysteries on the side. Set on the Lake Superior coastline in Minnesota, the series is chock-full of quirky characters. [Item F-H110, \\$10.99, solapublishing.com](#)



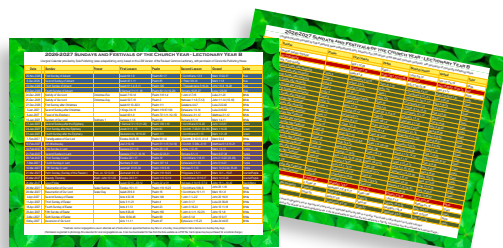
DEVOTIONAL

A Thirty-Day Walk through Luther's Small Catechism is designed for daily reflection on a journey from Law to Gospel and also serves as an overview on the themes of the Small Catechism. By Peggy Hoppes. [Item D-H110, \\$6.99, solapublishing.com](#)

THIS MONTH'S UNEXPECTEDLY AWESOME RESOURCE

Sola Publishing recommends the use of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod version of the Revised Common Lectionary as found in the Lutheran Service Book from Concordia Publishing House. Lectionary inserts and other worship products produced by Sola Publishing are used by permission and based on the LCMS version of the RCL, rather than the ELCA version.

PDF copies of this calendar may be downloaded from the Sola Publishing for free; permission is granted to photocopy these sheets for local congregational use.



Visit solapublishing.com and use the Sola drop menu near the logo to select Free Resources, then choose Worship/Lectionary to see available downloads.

... AND A GAME

Find the words designated in bold print in this word search made from Luther's Morning Prayer.

In the **name** of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit**. I thank you, my **heavenly** Father, through **Jesus Christ**, your **dear** Son, that you have **kept** me this **night** from all **harm** and **danger**; and I ask you to **protect** me this **day** also from **sin** and **every evil**, that in all I do **today** I may **please** you. For into your **hands** I **commend myself**, my **body** and **soul**, and all that is mine. Let your **holy angel** watch over me, that the **wicked foe** have no **power** over me. **Amen**.

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